

the nightmare I endured is worth the light you bring me. by [harryisqueen](#)

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Summary:

El reflects on the events of the past year since she escaped from the lab and met Mike in the rain

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Growing up for El was not even growing up. She was always locked in a room sometimes without food because

“You didn’t behave Eleven, food is a privilege, not a right.”

On these nights where she was hungry & lying on the stone hard bed, Papa provided for her she would think. That maybe somewhere in an alternate universe in a perfect world she was not forced to do the things she did not want to do. She was happy. With a Papa who did not use her for what she did not want to do.

When El had finally managed to escape the lab, it had meant everything to her. The outside world was scary but she refused to go back to that place. The place that held her prisoner for 12 years of her life. 12 years she would never be able to get back. A childhood she would never be able to live because of the selfishness of one man. On that wonderful scary night she managed to escape, she had her first interaction with someone she would refer to as a “good man”. Unlike the bad men, this man didn’t try to force her to do things. He was the first “good man” she had interacted with in her 12 years of life.

She liked Benny. However, he was the first person that taught her not to trust just anyone that was nice to you. He had called the bad men on her. Of course, she felt bad that he had to die but there was no way she would never go back to the lab. Back to papa.

She could not believe her luck when later that night she had met the boy who seemed to be around her age in the pouring rain. He had taken her back to his home and made her a warm fort. For the first time in her life, she felt what some might call safe. Looking back, she knew she was naïve. When she was living with Mike despite the fact of feeling safe, she was never actually safe. The bad men were always after her.

Just a short week later low and behold the bad men had found her

and was running from them just the like the day she had left the lab. That same night she had managed to defeat the Demogorgon and had been locked in the upside down was the start to 353 days of complete isolation from Mike and her friends.

She would eternally grateful for Hopper taking her in and taking care of her. That was very selfless of him. However, she still felt it was very selfish of him to keep her isolated away. She understands now why he had and what the consequences could have possibly been if she had left the cabin during any of those 353 days. Then all she had thought about was how lonely she was and how much she missed Mike.

The glorious day she left the cabin to seek out her older sister Kali was the start of when she would see Mike again. Once she had left the cabin, she knew the best place to find Mike would most likely be the school. So, that was the first place she went to look for him. The boy she had been watching and missing for 353 days. She had been deeply discouraged and sad when she found Mike in the gymnasium with a redhead she had never seen before. Once she saw the redhead, she left the school and went to seek out her sister.

However, seeing Kali was a major let down. She had put Kali on such a high pedestal because she was her older sister with similar talents to her own. When El found out her sister sought out the bad men and killed them for their evil doings it made El sick to her stomach. She however never voiced this aloud. Not even when she decided to return to her true home (Hawkins).

Upon returning to Hawkins she soon found out that everyone was gathered at the Byers house because “dart” the demo dog Dustin had been raising had grown (a lot) and was now wreaking havoc on the small town of Hawkins just like the Demogorgon had. However as selfish as it might have been El did not care about the Demo dog or anything along those lines right now. She was determined to find Mike and hug him after 353 days of isolation.

When she had arrived at the Byers house, she was thoroughly annoyed to see a demo dog in her way. She sent it flying through the window before climbing up the porch steps. She then focused

strongly on the doorknob to unlock it. Once the lock had fallen out of its resting place, she then swung the door open with her opens.

Her eyes immediately began searching the room for Mike. It did not take her long before her eyes settled on him. His beautiful smile stretched across his face upon seeing her.

“Mike” she let out in a light whisper.

Her feet carried themselves the short distance to meet Mike. To wrap her arms around his form like she had been dying to do for 353 days. She felt her self slightly gasp upon finally being able to wrap her arms around him.

She heard a faint voice of “is that-.”

She squeezed Mike tighter to her. Scared to let go. Terrified if she did she would be back in the void wishing she could wrap her arms around him.

“I never gave up on you. I called you every night, every night for-.”

She cut him off “353 days. I heard.”

At this Mike seemed to deflate his voice dropping

“Why didn’t you tell me you were there? That you were okay?” He questioned seeming hurt.

Before El had, the chance to respond Hopper jumped into the conversation.

“Because I wouldn’t let her,” Hopper said a slight trace of guilt laced in his voice. Hopper then proceeded to ask her where she had been. She replied with a slight attitude saying “where have you been?” Hopper then embraced El pulling her to his chest in a hug.

“You’ve been hiding her,” Mike spoke up breaking the short moments of silence. “You’ve been hiding her this whole time,” Mike said to hopper angrily shoving his shoulder.

Once Mike had shoved Hopper, Hopper then grabbed Mike by his shirt.

“Hey, hey, hey. Let’s talk. Alone.” Hopper demanded pulling Mike into a room.

El could hear most of their fighting. She could hear Mike yelling at Hopper. Then she heard quiet heartbreaking sobs. She knew they were coming from Mike and now she wanted nothing more than to embrace him again.

While Mike and Hopper had been fighting, El had managed to reunite with the boys. Hugging them both and pointing out Dustin’s new teeth. Then the same female voice from earlier that had said “is that-“started walking towards her. El recognized her immediately. This was the girl in the Gym that had been with Mike.

“Eleven, hey um I’m Max I’ve heard a lot about you.” The redhead smiled at her.

El decided to ignore her walking past the girl to greet Joyce.

Not even an hour later Hopper and Eleven were on their way to DOE to finally and permanently close the gate. The car ride over was not awkward per say but it definitely was not optimal conversation. Upon reaching the department of energy, El tried to walk the halls with as much confidence as possible. Ignoring the painful flashbacks that were swirling through her head.

El didn’t remember much after she had sealed the gate. All she remembered was this moment right now. Waking up to see Mike’s face squished against the mattress she was sleeping in. He had clearly demanded to be by her side. She gently ran her fingers over the many freckles that littered his nose. His face twitched at the slight tickling sensation but he did not wake up.

She laughed slightly at how Mike looked. His face smashed against the mattress. Maybe this time around in Hawkins life would work out better. Maybe this time around she could be happy. Her life previously had been anything but happy. But Mike the boy who lay

there smooshed against the mattress of this bed had saved her. Not only from the lab and not only literally. He had saved her from the dark place her mind was always in. She knew there was no way she could have survived in the Cabin without Mike calling her for 353 days. In addition, maybe, just maybe she could be a normal girl. With a normal life. And maybe if she was lucky. A normal boyfriend.

Author's Note:

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thoughts?